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January 13, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Visit of President Segni

As one who had followed Italian affairs for President Kennedy, I thought I might send along a few comments on the Segni visit to supplement the useful memorandum of the Secretary of State.

1. President Segni is a veteran Italian politician who has served his country honorably in a variety of posts. With Americans he likes to play the part of a wise, genial, liberal-minded friend, an objective elder statesman far above grubby Italian domestic politics, seeking only to offer us his disinterested advice. In fact, he is a tough and determined conservative operator, who has been deeply opposed to the center-left reform program (just a little less so now with Fanfani out of the picture) and who retains political interests of his own in the Italian situation.
2. He probably has a number of ulterior motives in making this trip. He resented President Kennedy's support of the center-left approach and doubtless hopes that you will think differently, or that he can persuade you to think differently. He would like to bring back to Rome the impression that he is the authoritative channel to and from the American government. In particular, he would like to use this visit as a means (a) of gathering ammunition against the Moro government, and (b) of enlarging the prestige and prerogatives of his own position as President of Italy.
3. The MLF will probably be crucial to Segni's strategy. If past experience is a guide, he would like to be able to return to Rome and say that Washington is insisting on an immediate final Italian commitment to the MLF. This would place in his hands a potent instrument with which to attack the Moro government. He has used this tactic before. Last November, when the Moro government was in process of formation, Segni "went so far as to send word to the PSI that the U. S. was pressing for a definite MLF commitment 'now'" (CIA Current Intelligence Weekly, January 3). The CIA adds that "Segni might exploit

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this issue again to strain the coalition." For this reason, it is important that nothing be said to Segni or any of his party which would allow them to claim that Washington is insisting on an MLF deadline. We should make it clear that we are trying neither to rush things nor to postpone them. (As for the Socialists, Reinhardt reports Nenni as saying on January 8 with regard to the MLF that "he felt sure that following British elections . . . he would be able to bring his party along"). In order to guard against misinterpretations of the U. S. position, it would help if Saragat were present in as many of the talks with American officials as possible.

4. I hope you will feel inclined to emphasize to Segni that you are an old New Dealer and believe that the course of social progress and justice is the best way to reduce the power of communism; that you well remember the wails of alarm from the American business community a generation ago over reform measures which are now accepted on every hand; and that you hope President Segni will use his great influence to get the conservative forces in Italy to go along with a reasonable reform program. You might also say (as recommended by our Embassy in Rome) that you look forward to a visit in the near future from Prime Minister Moro.

Arthur Schlesinger, jr.

cc: cc: Ray Cline
Bill Moyers

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